

Promotion of Integrated Biodiversity Conservation and Land Degradation Neutrality in Highly Degraded Landscapes of Iraq

Basic Information

GEF ID

10672

Countries

Iraq

Project Title

Promotion of Integrated Biodiversity Conservation and Land Degradation Neutrality in Highly Degraded Landscapes of Iraq

GEF Agency(ies)

UNEP

Agency ID

UNEP: 01853

GEF Focal Area(s)

Multi Focal Area

Program Manager

Ulrich Apel

PIF

Part I – Project Informatic

Focal area elements

1. Is the project/program aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements in Table A, as defined by the GEF 7 Programming Directions?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Clarification requested.

The project is aligned with BD and LD objectives in Table A. However, the alignment and rationale of the project throughout the PIF text needs to be more consistent and further elaborated. Please note all relevant review comments made further below in the revision of the PIF.

Please clarify if biodiversity conservation is going to be integrated in existing sector policies. If so, consideration should be made for BD Objective 1 which looks at mainstreaming. This can be in addition to the Objective 2-7 on Protected Areas.

The same point applies to revision of policies/plans to integrate LDN. In this case the project should also consider Objective LD-2-5.

Please explain how the project justifies the Rio-Marker "1" for CC-M. If a Rio Marker is selected, please enter a estimated target for land based mitigation under core indicator 6.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

1. Yes, biodiversity conservation will be integrated into development policies. We included Programming Direction BD-1-1 in Table A.
2. We included Objective LD-2-5 and ensured GEF Project financing and co-finance amount of component 1 provided in Table B is aligned with Table A.
3. We marked Rio Marker CC-M as 0.

Indicative project/program description summary

2. Are the components in Table B and as described in the PIF sound, appropriate, and sufficiently clear to achieve the project/program objectives and the core indicators?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not fully. See below comments and clarification questions:

- Project objective: "Middle Euphrates" can this term stand alone or is an addition like "basin" or "landscape" needed?

Overall, should be a mix of Technical Assistance and Investment, at the moment the Table only indicates Technical Assistance.

- Component 1:

- Indicators: how is support to BD conservation and LDN measured by the capacity development scorecard? What indicator is measuring the increased capacity of government stakeholders to implement the Integrated Conservation Management Framework?

- Output 1.1.1: "to receive support" is not an output. The output should be the assessment itself.

- Output 3.1.2: What are "local measures"? Does it refer to the "locally adaptive LDN measures" as referred to in 3.1.1?

- Output 3.1.3: What is meant by "management mechanisms"? maybe practices? What is meant by "infrastructure"?

- Is it 'adoption' of new policies or revision/reform of existing policies?

- Are there plans to include a monitoring framework for the implementation phase of the ICMF? Is there available baseline data to inform the development of the Framework and the mechanisms for monitoring and updating this data as the Framework is implemented? We note the inclusion of a habitat and biological monitoring system under Output 2.1.3. However, there is absence of a system to monitor land related data- degradation, vegetative cover etc. Please clarify

- Output 1.1.4 should be not only be 'multi-stakeholder', but also multi-sectoral.

- Component 2:

- Community based adaptation plans is not eligible for BD funding. What could be explored is ensuring that the PA Management plans factor in resilience

- Component 3

- It would be good to include an indicator that measures increased productivity for farmers and the # of farmers who will benefit
- See further comments on the focus of this component below.
- Is there any consideration to support farmer extension services or strengthen farmer cooperative systems to ensure continuity of activities?
- Are there plans to consider increased access to finance/credit by the farmers to ensure continuity of SLM practices
- Component 4:
- Should also include activities related to overall project monitoring.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

Agency Response

1. We included 'landscape' in the project objective.
2. The new GEF Portal doesn't allow us to choose multiple options on the support type. We provided % of TA and INV of each component in the PIF file. We entered the highest % option on the GEF Portal.
3. We revised the indicator definition. It now reads as an Increased capacity of the Ministry of Health and Environment to implement Integrated Conservation Management Framework as measured by the Capacity Development Scorecard.
4. We revised Output1.1.1 as advised.
5. We revised Output 3.1.2. Now it reads "Locally adaptive LDN measures to enhance water..."
6. We changed the statement to 'management practices', we highlighted that the practices will include both revisions of the existing policies but also the development of new policies. We revised Output 2.1.3 so that it will support monitoring of the health of the land and we linked that the results of Output 3.1.3 will be monitored with the system that will be developed under Output 2.1.3.

7. We also mentioned that the working group will be multi-sectoral.

8. Component 2. Our purpose was to enhance the resilience of new Protected areas to climate change with the involvement of the community. We included this as part of the management plan and removed Output 2.1.4

9. Component 3: We included the suggested two indicators. The baseline and target for the two indicators will be identified at PPG. We specified that the training of farmers and farmer cooperatives will be conducted in collaboration with the Office of Agricultural Extension Services and Training under Output 3.1.4. We included a new output on innovative finance. We will work with UNEP-FI during the PPG to identify possible options.

10. Component 4: We defined all project monitoring and evaluation activities under a new output under Component 4.

Co-financing

3. Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines, with a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Yes.

10/14/2020: However, the reviewer notes that the indicative composition of the total co-finance may not be fully adequate as it is mostly in kind and only \$500,000 in grant resources. To ensure a full project success in the long-term, the agency and all stakeholders should make an effort and explore increasing the in grant co-finance during PPG stage and to report back at CEO endorsement stage on those efforts.

Agency Response

GEF Resource Availability

4. Is the proposed GEF financing in Table D (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within

the resources available from (mark all that apply):

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/24/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

The STAR allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/24/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

The focal area allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/24/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

The LDCF under the principle of equitable access

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/24/2020: Yes.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion n/a

Agency Response

The SCCF (Adaptation or Technology Transfer)?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion n/a

Agency Response

Focal area set-aside?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion n/a

Agency Response

Impact Program Incentive?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion n/a

Agency Response

Project Preparation Grant

5. Is PPG requested in Table E within the allowable cap? Has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated? (not applicable to PFD)

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/24/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Core indicators

6. Are the identified core indicators in Table F calculated using the methodology included in the correspondent Guidelines? (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not fully.

Indicator 6 should also be completed, to account for potential emissions avoided due to land-based interventions, in case the project has selected 1 for the CCM Rio Marker.

10/14/2020: Addressed. Rio Marker has been set to "0" and the project targets do not justify estimation of carbon benefits.

Cleared

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Agency Response

12Oct2020

We revised CCM Rio Marker from 1 to 0 as CCM is not one of the objectives of the project.

Project/Program taxonomy

7. Is the project/ program properly tagged with the appropriate keywords as requested in Table G?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not fully.

Does not reflect climate change or resilience although Mitigation and Adaptation are indicated as co-benefits.

10/14/2020: Addressed as per agency response below.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

We tagged adaptation since one of the targeted outputs is factoring enhancement of the new PAs' resilience to climate change. Mitigation is not one of the objectives of the Project and we revised the Rio marker accordingly.

art II – Project Justification

1. Has the project/program described the global environmental / adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers that need to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not fully.

The description provided in the respective section 1.1 is more a general description of the situation, it does not really carve out the problems to be addressed and it does not provide a rationale for why interventions are needed, and it is not clearly connected with what the project proposes to invest in.

Additional information on the socio-economic context of the landscape would be useful. For example, the main economic sectors, the overall population and the number of farmers in the targeted region, the level of productivity, involvement of private sector, the gender dimensions etc.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

1. We provided additional information about environmental problems and their drivers. In addition, we provided the linkage between the environmental problems (e.g salinity) and the needed interventions (e.g. lack of strategic frameworks).

2. Socio-economic data on the targeted landscape is not available however we provided the socio-economic profile of the country, which is the same in the targeted landscape. We will refine our analysis at the PPG phase and will provide local socio-economic statistics.

2. Is the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects appropriately described?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: No.

The baseline scenario is reduced to a discussion of the KBA areas. What is the baseline in terms of BD conservation in general? What is the LDN baseline? It is also recommended to move the discussion of drylands management and food systems (which is included in the innovation section) into the baseline discussion.

The baseline projects are only listed and briefly described. This description does not explain on HOW they form a baseline, and on HOW the project will build on it and again doesn't have a clear rationale and connection to what the project proposes to do.

Additional information is needed on how this project will build on the existing projects outlined in the PIF including GEF funded projects. The baseline should also explain what previous GEF SLM projects (i.e. the GEF-6 FAO SLM project) have achieved in this respect and how the proposed project will build on it.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

1. After the reduction in the oil prices, the Ministry's budget has significantly been reduced and the major biodiversity conservation activities have been limited to internationally funded activities. We highlighted some of the major ones as baseline projects. We provided the LDN baseline and also moved the section on drylands management to baseline.

2. We highlighted some key elements of these projects, which we consider how the proposed project will benefit from the baseline portfolio and will build on. We provided what GEF funded PAN achieved. The GEF-6 FAO SLM did not start in 2019 as it was planned. The achievements are yet on the formation of the Project team and exchanges with stakeholders. We expect to have a stronger engagement with the Project Team at the PPG phase.

3. Does the proposed alternative scenario describe the expected outcomes and components of the project/program?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not fully.

The alternative scenario seems to focus on the BD conservation component of the project (especially in the bold text in this section). Further, the section should also include a concise summary description of the Theory of Change (ToC) and make reference to the attached graphic of the ToC. It is appreciated that the ToC graphic is attached, but without a concise description in the text it is difficult to make a connection to it.

Further, the project needs to explain how the BD component will contribute to NBSAP and how the SLM component will contribute to the LDN targets.

This section also makes mention of the following 'The project will also demonstrate sustainable food systems through implementing nature based solutions to landscape restoration at the local level through (a) capacity development programme for farmers, including resource mobilization, advocacy and communication related to ecosystem valuation and (b) training for local stakeholders e.g. farmers, PA managers, agricultural associations on best practices for agrobiodiversity water conservation and climate smart agriculture'.

Please clarify how working on food systems fits in with the overall proposal. Is Component 3 focused on rehabilitating degraded land in order to generate GEBs and increased productivity and livelihoods or is it focused on sustainable food systems. If the latter, we would need additional information on the food of focus and the context around the production/processing/stakeholders involved in this food system.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

1. We revised the bold text in the alternative scenario, it was not highlighting the overall objective of the Project. The project aims to strengthen local and national capacity for biodiversity conservation and LDN implementation. We provided a short paragraph on the description of ToC and also linked how the Project will support SDGs.

2. We briefly provided how the project contributes to NBSAP and LDN strategy in Section 7 Consistency with National Priorities. Based on the comment, we provided additional text in the alternative section, how the project contributes to NBSAP and LDN targets.

3. We clarified that the Project action under Component 3 is to improve the sustainable flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustain food production. We removed the misleading phrase on 'sustainable food systems'.

4. Is the project/program aligned with focal area and/or Impact Program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

5. Is the incremental / additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

6. Are the project's/program's indicative targeted contributions to global environmental benefits (measured through core indicators) reasonable and achievable? Or for adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not fully.

Section 1.6 has several shortcomings that need to be addressed:

- include the BD targets that are listed in the core indicator table and an explanation;
- Confirm in this section that the areas to be designated as PAs are KBAs.
- include the SLM targets that are listed in the core indicator table and provide further detail on how they are derived at and what benefits will the project bring to those areas;
- Make number of direct beneficiaries consistent with the core indicators table. Please clarify who is included in the 30,000 beneficiaries
- Please also include the potential co-benefits for Adaptation as RIO 1 was selected for CCA (in PIF text)
- - It is not clear how this project is contributing the LDN targets outlined for Iraq in Section 1.2

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

1. We included the BD target (establishment of 182,081 ha new PAs by highlighting that they are KBAs
2. We included SLM target under Component 3
3. Finally, we revised the direct beneficiary numbers in the first paragraph and included the co-benefit for Adaptation.
4. We provided an additional explanation on how the project is contributing to LDN targets on pages 16, 21, and 23.

7. Is there potential for innovation, sustainability and scaling up in this project?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not adequately described.

This section is described in general and slightly superficial terms. Especially the part on sustainability is very generic. Please refer to STAP guidance of what elements of sustainability (durability) GEF projects should address and in which way. Questions of COVID-19 risk and opportunities and the context of a fragile situation in the country (which is discussed elsewhere in the PIF) may play into the sustainability assessment.

The word "manpower" right in front of a sentence on gender empowerment is misplaced.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

We revised the sustainability section in line with the comment and the suggested STAP guideline " Achieving enduring outcomes from GEF investment".

Project/Program Map and Coordinates

Is there a preliminary geo-reference to the project's/program's intended location?

is there a preliminary geo reference to the projects/programs intended location.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Stakeholders

Does the PIF/PFD include indicative information on Stakeholders engagement to date? If not, is the justification provided appropriate? Does the PIF/PFD include information about the proposed means of future engagement?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Is the articulation of gender context and indicative information on the importance and need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, adequate?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not fully.

While there are references to gender throughout the PIF, the question of what are the project specific opportunities to promote gender equality and women empowerment is not clearly carved out.

These dimensions should be integrated throughout the project and in particular in the Alternative Scenario.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

We integrated the gender-related opportunities into the log frame and the alternative scenario.

Private Sector Engagement

Is the case made for private sector engagement consistent with the proposed approach?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: No.

Either provide a strong justification of why the project does not have any private sector engagement, or alternatively, make an effort to involve private sector into the approach. Table B mentions economic incentives and also the SLM component should offer opportunities for doing that. It is therefore difficult to understand how private sector does not have a role in a project that involves improving productive landscapes that utilize agriculture as a main income earner as well as given the mention that the designated PAs can be used as eco-tourism sites. It is also necessary to consider the role of private sector in Component 1.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

We reflected that the private sector will be one of the key stakeholders in the working groups under Component 1. We highlighted that the

He reiterated that the private sector will be one of the key stakeholders in the working groups under component 1. He emphasized that the project will collaborate with the private sector on the development and implementation of ecotourism plans. Finally, under component 3 has elements of how the private sector will play in SLM. A summary of these private sector partnership plans is provided in Section 4.4. Private sector engagement.

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Does the project/program consider potential major risks, including the consequences of climate change, that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved or may be resulting from project/program implementation, and propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not adequately.

What is needed in the PIF in further detail is a separate discussion of climate risks and of COVID-19 risks and opportunities (i.e. how the project can contribute to green recovery plans of Iraq). The brief mention of both issues in the risk assessment table is not sufficient. Throughout the text these issues need to be considered in the design and the activities.

On climate risks: the issue of droughts need to be further elaborated and a link made to the UNCCD agenda, and to national plans.

On COVID-19 risks and opportunities assessment: please refer to GEF guidance paper on how to address COVID-19 risks and opportunities that has been sent out to all agencies.

Please also include the potential mitigation measures should the government have to reallocate planned cofinancing to address COVID related medium term impacts.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

1. We inserted climate risks (specifically on droughts) and relevant measures under Component 1 and 3 descriptions on pages 19-20.

2. By using the covid-19 risks opportunities guidance, we highlighted at the beginning of an alternative scenario how this poses a risk to the project and suggested some actions. We included our suggested mitigation measure on the co-finance in the risks section.

Coordination

**Is the institutional arrangement for project/program coordination including management, monitoring and evaluation outlined?
Is there a description of possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project/program area?**

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not adequately.

The PIF should not include exceptional implementation/execution arrangements for which no official request has been made by the OFP in line with GEF policies and guidelines. Please remove those references (including the listing of UNEP as executing agency in Part I of the PIF). Alternatively, the OFP has to submit the exception request now at PIF stage.

As the agency is well aware of, the implementation and execution roles on GEF projects are meant to be separate as per GEF policy and guidelines. The GEFSEC will analyze any requests for dual role playing by an agency at the time of CEO endorsement and only approve those cases that it deems warranted on an "exceptional" basis, based on country requests. We strongly encourage the project proponents to look at third party options as a preferred way forward. We also strongly encourage the agency to discuss any and all options for project execution that do not include the government with the GEFSEC early in the PPG phase. The technical clearance of this PIF in no way endorses or encourages any alternative execution arrangement.

10/14/2020: Addressed as per agency response below.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

We removed the execution modality suggestion from the PIF. We will revisit the execution modality during the PPG and if will consult with the GEF Secretariat on possible execution modalities at the PPG phase.

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project/program cited alignment with any of the recipient country's national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not fully.

While the alignment is cited in general terms, please elaborate on how exactly and to what extent the project will contribute to national plans and targets under the NBSAP and the LDN targets.

10/14/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

We provided further details on how the project will contribute to NBSAP and LDN in the alternative scenario section.

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed "knowledge management (KM) approach" in line with GEF requirements to foster learning and sharing from relevant projects/programs, initiatives and evaluations; and contribute to the project's/program's overall impact and sustainability?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Not fully.

Please elaborate on the experiences mentioned in context with the GEF-6 FAO SLM project that the proposed project may use.

10/14/2020: Addressed as per agency response below.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

There is not yet any experience shared by the GEF6 FAO SLM project. The Project has not started yet. Our assumption is that while this Project in its PPG phase, the FAO SLM Project will complete its first year and we will reflect those early findings in the design of this Project's knowledge management.

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately documented at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Yes.

While the reviewer is not in a position to comment on the content of the ESS assessment, it is surprising, that the overall rating is 'low', which is very different from previous assessments. Please briefly explain of how the overall assessment has been derived at.

10/14/2020: Risk level has been changed to "moderate".

Cleared

Agency Response

Agency Response

12Oct2020

Our ESS expert reassessed the Project's ESS and suggested to consider the project as a moderate risk Project. We revised the rating and the ESS document on the portal.

Part III – Country Endorsements

Has the project/program been endorsed by the country's GEF Operational Focal Point and has the name and position been checked against the GEF data base?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: Yes.

The OFP letter is accepted. However, please note that OFP letters should not include any reference to policy exceptions. The request for exceptional execution arrangements has to be made separately.

The technical clearance of this PIF in no way endorses or encourages any alternative execution arrangement.

10/14/2020: Addressed as per agency response below.

Cleared

Agency Response

12Oct2020

Well noted, we will reassess the execution modality and if needed do an upstream consultation with the GEF Secretariat.

Termsheet, reflow table and agency capacity in NGI Projects

Does the project provide sufficient detail in Annex A (indicative termsheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table in Annex B to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. After reading the questionnaire in Annex C, is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional

finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

n/a

Agency Response

EFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is the PIF/PFD recommended for technical clearance? Is the PPG (if requested) being recommended for clearance?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/24/2020: No. Please address comments made in the review.

10/14/2020: Yes. Program Manager recommends CEO clearance.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Additional recommendations to be considered by Agency at the time of CEO endorsement/approval.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

01/14/2020:

The reviewer notes that the indicative composition of the total co-finance may not be fully adequate as it is mostly in kind and only \$500,000

The reviewer notes that the increasing composition of the total co-finance may not be fully adequate as it is mostly in-kind and only 400,000 in grant resources. To ensure a full project success in the long-term, the agency and all stakeholders should make an effort and explore increasing the in grant co-finance during PPG stage and to report back at CEO endorsement stage on those efforts.

Reference is also made to the risk assessment table in the PIF, which lists the availability of co-financing by the government as a medium risk. The mitigation measures listed there is: "Co-finance is one of the key components of the project success. This is always a risk especially if the Government budget is further affected with future oil price changes. We will work with the government partners on the sources of co-finance and will establish some lead indicators measuring the flow of co-finance. As a back-up plan, we will identify key donors supporting Iraq and we will keep them aware about the Project starting from the PPG phase."

Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	9/24/2020	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/14/2020	10/12/2020
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		

PIF Recommendation to CEO

Brief reasoning for recommendations to CEO for PIF Approval

Degraded Landscapes of Iraq” has the objective to strengthen governmental and non-governmental capacities to achieve biodiversity conservation and land degradation neutrality in the Middle Euphrates landscape through integrated landscape management. Based on strengthened policy, legal and regulatory frameworks, the project will expand the network of Protected Areas (PA) by establishing four new protected areas and develop and implement the management plans. The Project will also support Iraq’s national Land Degradation Neutrality targets by assessing and surveying key land degradation drivers and developing decision support tools for locally adaptive LDN measures. In addition, the project will demonstrate local measures to enhance water conservation and preventing loss of soil and its fertility. The project will result in improved institutional and technical capacities at the ministerial and governorate level, and increased awareness among stakeholders at all levels on the importance of establishment and management of protected areas, sustainable land use and soil conservation measures. The project will improve management in 182,000 ha of PAs, improve management on 20,000 ha of agricultural area, and benefit 300,000 people.